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Mr. Cooke's



At the Ordination

of the

Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr. Cotton Bacon,

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*The solemn Charge given to Ministers, to commit the Truth  
and Doctrines of the Gospel, to faithful and able Men*

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Consider'd in a

# S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

# O R D I N A T I O N

Of the Reverend

*Mr. Cotton Brown,*

To the Pastoral Care of the Church of CHRIST in  
*Brooklin.*

*October 26. 1748.*

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*By Samuel Cooke, A. M.*

*Pastor of the Second Church in Cambridge.*

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*2 Tim. i. 13. Hold fast the Form of sound Words, which thou hast  
heard of me, in Faith and Love.*

*1 Tim. vi. 3, 4. If any Man teach otherwise, and consent not to  
wholesome Words, even the Words of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and  
to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness—He is proud knowing no-  
thing, but doing about Questions, and Strifes of Words, whereof cometh  
Strife, evil Surmising, perverse Disputings, &c.*

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BOSTON, N. E. Printed by ROGERS and FOWLE in Queen-  
Street. 1748.

The solemn charge given to Ministers to commit the truths  
and Doctrines of the Gospel, to faithful and able Men;

Consistently in a

ORTHODOX

Proceed at the

ORDINATION

Of the Reverend

Mr. Cotton Brooks,



To the Episcopal Church of Christ in

October 20. 1743.

A. M. COOPER

Pastor of the Second Church in Cambridge.

I shall not fail to give the best of my power, and ability, to the  
cause of the Gospel, and to the instruction of the people, and to  
the promotion of the Christian religion, and to the glory of God the  
Father, and to the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the  
comfort of the Church, and to the salvation of the souls of men.

BOSTON: Printed by H. Kneass and Son, in Queen-  
Street. 1743.



AN  
**Ordination SERMON.**

II. Tim. ii. 2.

*And the Things that thou hast heard of me  
among many Witnesses, the same commit  
thou to faithful Men, who shall be able  
to teach others also.*

**T**HE Passage under Consideration, is a Part of that solemn Advice or Charge which the great Apostle *Paul*, under the immediate Direction of the Divine SPIRIT, gave to *Timothy*, set apart to the sacred Office, ordain'd a Bishop, an Overseer, or Minister of the Church of CHRIST; and as 'tis left upon sacred Record, it ought to have the same Weight, with all; in every succeeding Age, who hold the same Office; and therefore may properly be consider'd on this Occasion.

I shall not stand to make any critical Remarks on the Words, or to take Notice of the different Sense, in which some have understood them.

The true and plain Meaning of the Apostle here seems to be this: The Truths and Doctrines of Christianity, which I have taught you, by the SPIRIT of GOD, and which have been confirmed to you by others; the same do you commit and give in Charge, to faithful and able Men,

Men, whom you shall ordain to the Work of the Gospel Ministry. And now, by this Direction and Charge, given to *Timothy*, must they, to the End of the World, conduct themselves, who introduce others to this sacred Employment; bearing this in their Minds, that the Truths, which he had heard and learned of this Apostle, and of the Reality of which he was assured, are now, become a Part of the sacred Canon, and contained in those Writings, which we receive as a Revelation from GOD.

The Words then being taken in this Sense, as a Direction and Charge, to those who have the Right, we claim, as Ministers of CHRIST of ordaining others to the Pastoral Office; the following Things naturally offer themselves to our Consideration, viz,

I. The Things to be committed, to those who are set apart to this Service.

II. The Character and Qualifications of those, to whom these Things are thus to be committed.

I. We are to consider the Things to be committed to those who are set apart to the Work of the Gospel Ministry.

And these are the Truths and Doctrines of Christianity, which the Ministers of the Gospel, as Teachers, are in every Age, in a special Manner, intrusted with.

These Truths, and no other, must they teach, or enjoin upon those, they commission to be Teachers of others.

The great Truths of our holy Religion, were at first received immediately from the Father of Lights, and were recorded by Men under the special Conduct of the Divine SPIRIT, for all Scripture is given by Inspiration of GOD; and the whole of what we are to believe and practise, is now contain'd in the sacred Oracles; for they are able to make wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in CHRIST JESUS; and they are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of GOD, the Teachers of it particularly



ticularly, might be made perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good Works, to all that belongs to their Office. We neither need, nor expect any other Rule of Faith, or Conduct, but the Truths contained in the written Word of God.

And the whole Truth herein contain'd, must be committed to those who are appointed Teachers in the Church of CHRIST: And they as well as we, are to deliver the whole Counsel of God, to those they take the Charge of, so nothing must be withheld from them, which they are obliged to dispense to others.

The Whole of divine Revelation, then as contain'd in the Books of the Old and New Testament, is to be committed or given in Charge to them, who are put into the Ministry of the Gospel of CHRIST, to be the Rule of their Preaching and Conduct, this they must be charg'd continually to observe, and do all Things whatsoever CHRIST has commanded.

And on the other Hand, There ought to be an equal Concern upon the Minds of those, who separate others to the Work of the Ministry, that they commit nothing to them, but what is contain'd in the sacred Oracles.

We must exercise the greatest Care and Caution here, lest we commit to them, for Doctrines, instead of the Doctrines of the Gospel, the Opinions of Men. We must upon Evidence, that will bear the Trial, be satisfied, that we don't impose upon them any Schemes, or private Sentiments of our own, or other Men's, or any Thing not clearly taught in the Oracles of GOD.

Ministers, in ordaining others to the immediate Service of CHRIST, act no longer by Warrant from him, than while they strictly adhere to the Instructions he has given them to act by, which are, to commit to others, the same Things which he has committed to them, in his Gospel.

And CHRIST will not only disown the Proceedings of those who act a contrary Part, but, where Carelessness, or any low, selfish Views, or an undue Regard to the Sentiments of fallible Men, are at the Bottom of it

It will manifest his righteous Displeasure against them.

If we or an Angel from Heaven, says the great Apostle, *Preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed* :† And we incur the same Guilt, when in this Sense we commit another Gospel, to Men as if we delivered it, in our Preaching. We are assured that all the Curses contained in this sacred Book, shall center on the Head of that Man, who shall add to these Things, as well as on his, who shall reject, or take away any Thing from them.

And now, when we consider these Things, and the solemn Charge lying upon those who have the special Trust of this heavenly Treasure, to impart or commit nothing to others but what is contained in this divine Treasury, and the whole of what is there repositied, we must be convinc'd, that the greatest Care and Caution is required.

And, with Submission, I think, it deserves our serious Thought and Enquiry, whether the important Doctrines of Christianity so far as they are Matters of pure Revelation, can be safely committed to others, in Words and Expressions different from those, in which, they are revealed to us in the Gospel of CHRIST. The Case seems to be widely different, with Respect to moral Duties, which are injoin'd in the sacred Oracles. These are agreeable to the Light of natural Reason, though greatly improved by divine Revelation, and they may be explain'd and confirm'd, by Arguments derived from the Nature and Fitness of Things, and so clearly and properly be express'd in different Words and Phrases.

But 'tis not easy to conceive, how this can be done, where all our Knowledge is gain'd by immediate Revelation.

These Doctrines are confessedly above the Reach of natural Reason, and so discoverable only by a Revelation from GOD. How then can we judge of them otherwise

† Gal. i. 9. Rev. xxii. 18.



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than by the Revelation GOD has favoured us with, comparing spiritual Things with spiritual, (*viz.*) illustrating, and proving one Passage by another? 'Tis hard to conceive, how in this Case, we can vary in Words and Expressions, and not in Sense and Meaning; which if we do, 'tis not the Doctrines of CHRIST but our own, which we commit to others.

But if we are sure our own Words and Expressions, convey the same Ideas, with those, in which these Doctrines, are contain'd in the Gospel; why do we insist upon their being express'd in different Words? Was not the divine Author of these important Truths, acquainted with the Propriety of Language? Or can we suppose that he would permit any Terms to be used in the Conveyance of these Doctrines to us, but such, as were the most proper to engage our Belief and Adherence to them.

And it may give some Light in this Case, if we consider, that when we make Use of our own Expressions and Phrases to convey the Idea of these Doctrines, it can, strictly speaking, be only our Opinion, or Interpretation of these Doctrines of CHRIST, which we deliver to others; And though we have a Right thus to conceive of these Truths, and thus to express our Sense of them, for the Instruction of others, yet we have no Right to make our Opinions the Standard of Truth; others, have the same unalienable Privilege that we claim, of exhibiting their Expositions of these Doctrines, in their own Expressions, and may receive or reject ours, according as they appear to them consonant to the sacred Oracles, or not; neither their Explanation of these Doctrines, nor ours, is to be received, as of equal Authority, with the Doctrines themselves, as delivered by CHRIST and his Apostles in the holy Scriptures.

To the very Words then and Expressions, in which these Doctrines are revealed in the Gospel, we must at last have Recourse to determine who is in the Right, or whether either. *To the Law, and to the Testimony, if they*

B

*speak*

*Speak not according to this, 'tis because there is no Light in them.*

And we can't have a clearer Evidence, that we do speak according to this, than when we expressly speak the same Things which the HOLY GHOST speaketh.

And 'tis worthy our Consideration, that not only particular Persons, but Numbers, even whole Sects or Parties of Christians, have been mistaken in their Explanations of these Doctrines of the Gospel: And it will readily be granted, that a great Part of the Christian World, at this Day, is in an Error as to these Points, and that those are at the greatest Distance from the Truth, who have been the most forward, to impose their own Expositions and Creeds upon others, with this unspeakable Disadvantage, that they are chain'd down in Error and Darkeness, and so prevented an impartial Enquiry after Truth.

And why should we expect, if we take the same Measures, to succeed better than others have done before us, unless we pretend to Inspiration, or the absurd Notion of Infallibility, which we justly censure in others.

And as we have the greatest Assurance, that we commit nothing to others, but what the great King and Head of the Church, has in his Gospel, committed to us, when we adhere to the Words the divine Author has used, so in this Case we have equal Reason to think, that these Doctrines will then be more properly received. They will come from us, with greater Weight and Authority, when they are introduc'd, with a **THUS SAITH THE LORD**, and come recommended, as **THE WORDS**, of the SPIRIT of all Truth.

'Tis true Men may evade the Force, even of Scripture Expressions, and while they give their Assent to the Words, not receive the Doctrines they contain in their true Sense: But I think it must be granted, that 'tis as likely, if not more so, that they may do the same, with respect to all human Tests.

For it must be consider'd, that though we have no Knowledge of these Doctrines, but by a Revelation from



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from Heaven, yet in the Gospel they are fully and clearly revealed to us, and the more so in Proportion to their Importance to us; and they must also be supposed to be interwoven with, and connected to the whole Scheme of Christianity, as represented in the Gospel of Christ; and therefore the Truths themselves, though not the *Modus* of them, must be obvious to every honest Enquirer after Truth, and may best be illustrated and supported, by different Passages of sacred Writ, which relate to the same Truths.

And it deserves an Enquiry, Whether these sacred Doctrines and Mysteries of our holy Religion, have not been brought into Contempt, and greatly lost their Force and Influence upon the Minds of Men, and particularly of those to whom they are in a special Manner committed, by being delivered, in Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth. *The Things of GOD*, (says the Apostle speaking of the Things we come to the Knowledge of, only by divine Revelation) *knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of GOD*: He adds, *Now we have received not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of GOD, that we might know the Things, which are freely given to us of GOD; which Things also we speak not in Words, which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual Things with spiritual.* And in the same Manner, we may doubtless, the most safely and profitably commit to others these sacred Truths.

The Sentiments indeed of wise and good Men, whether living or dead, relating to these Truths and Doctrines, we are to study and thankfully receive, as Helps in the Discovery of Christian Verity, and humbly and modestly dissent from their Opinion, when we can't see Things in the Light they do; but must never receive them implicitly, or set them up for the Rule of our Belief, instead of the Oracles of GOD, or require it of others. We shall be in continual Danger of falling into

*I Cor. II. 12, 13.* Error

Error and Confusion, while fallible Men have Dominion over our Faith, and while all Parties fondly imagine, that Wisdom will die with them, and are disposed to dethrone the great Head of the Church, and place themselves in his Stead, by imposing their Sentiments and Opinions upon others, as if they were sure that they and they only had the Keys of Divine Knowledge.

But if we could be brought to a due Sense of our Liableness to Mistakes, and to content ourselves with what GOD has been graciously pleas'd to reveal to us, concerning these Doctrines in his Word of Truth, and not pretend to be wise above what is written; we might then hope, that we should come to think, as well as speak the same Things, and particularly on such Occasions as this, might then be satisfied, that we comply with the Charge given by the Apostle in our Text, that we commit the **SAME THINGS**, to others, which **CHRIST** in his Gospel, has committed to us.

And thus I have considered, the Things to be committed to those who are separated to the Service of the Sanctuary.

II. I now proceed in the Second Place, to consider, To whom these Things are to be committed, or in other Words, the Character and Qualifications of a Gospel Minister, as pointed out to us in the Text, viz. *Faithfulness and Ability to teach.*

1. *Faithfulness.* The same commit thou to *faithful Men.*

The Word *Faithful*, is here doubtless to be taken in the same Sense, in which 'tis commonly used in our Language, which appears to be fully expressive of its Meaning in the Original: It intends in general, an honest upright Man, one who is worthy of Trust and Credit, and when restrained to Christianity, as it seems to be here, it must intend one who is sincere in his Belief and Practice of the Christian Religion, or a true Disciple of **JESUS**

**CHRIST:**



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CHRIST : And such must those be according to a Judgment of Charity, whom we commission to dispense these weighty Truths to others. Indeed those who are intrusted with this Power, can no more than other Men know the Hearts of others, or be certain from what Principles they act, and none but those of a weak or distempered Brain, ever pretended to it.

And indeed it don't appear that the Apostles themselves in ordinary Cases, had this Power given them, to know the Hearts of Men, they seem to have acted in this Case upon Principles of common Discretion, and 'tis apparent that in particular Instances, they were mistaken as to the true Characters of Men : Though the Directions and Rules they delivered, by which Men were to examine and judge themselves, were infallible, yet they did not pretend commonly to form a Judgment of the Temper of Men's Minds, and so of their real State, otherwise than by their Lives and Conversation, bearing in Mind what he had declar'd, who knew what was in Man, *By their Fruits ye shall know them.* And this is the only safe Rule to direct us in judging of others, and even of those we introduce to the Work of the Gospel Ministry.

But here the greatest Care and Caution we are capable of, must be employ'd, lest we commit this Trust to Men who are unfaithful. We ought, before we lay our Hands upon them, to have a considerable Acquaintance with their Lives and Behaviour, or be well satisfied of their regular Conduct from others, who have had Opportunity for it, and are capable of giving us Satisfaction, in this important Point. For 'tis required of Stewards, of those especially, who are to impart to others these heavenly Mysteries, that they be found faithful.

'Tis of the last Importance to the Cause of Truth and Religion, that those who are Teachers and Rulers in the Church of CHRIST are faithful Men, faithful to their great LORD and Master, and in promoting the best Interest of those committed to their Care. As nothing but the Truths contained in the Gospel of CHRIST, are to be

be committed to them, so they must deliver and teach nothing else to their People, while they preach in his Name, and by Authority derived from him.

They must call no Man Father or Master, so as to derogate from the Honour of him who is KING and LORD over his own Church, neither must they be called of Men, Rabbi, or assume that Authority in Matters of Religion, which CHRIST has not given, and which they justly deny to others.

They must receive no Man's Opinion, as of any Authority in Matters of Faith, but only as a Help to a true Understanding of the Laws and Doctrines of CHRIST.

And the whole Counsel of GOD, as revealed in the Gospel, they must faithfully and impartially deliver, and rightly divide the Word of Truth, imparting to every one his Portion in due Season.

They must faithfully teach the Doctrines, which relate to the Person and Offices of CHRIST, as taught in the Bible, and the Terms of Acceptance with GOD, in and through him— That there is not Salvation in any other, neither is there any other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby we must be saved— That we are in CHRIST chosen to Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth. That we are by Nature far from GOD, and Children of Wrath, even as others, as all have sinned and come short of the Glory of GOD.

They must faithfully teach Repentance toward GOD, and Faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and that except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of GOD— That Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of GOD.

They must faithfully preach the Encouragements of the Gospel, as well as the Threatnings of the Law, and show GOD's Readiness to help Men, who suitably attend upon him in a Way of Duty, and that he who hath begun a good Work in them, will perform it to the Day of CHRIST.

They



They must faithfully set before Men, the unspeakable Rewards, as well as the eternal Miseries of the future World : And that there is a Day approaching, in which CHRIST will judge the World in Righteousness, and render to every Man according to the Things done in the Body, whether good or evil.

And this is one of the true and faithful Sayings, which they must constantly affirm, that *they who believe in CHRIST, are careful to maintain good Works.*

In a Word, they must teach all Things, whatsoever CHRIST in the Gospel has commanded, if they would be accounted faithful.

They must preach, not themselves, but CHRIST, LORD, and themselves his Servants, for the Sake of his People.

They must act with Fidelity, in all their Administrations of the Discipline of CHRIST's Church, doing nothing through Strife or vain Glory, but without Partiality and without Hypocrisy : And so faithfully guide, as well as feed the Church of GOD, which he hath purchas'd with his own Blood.

To sum up all here, would they obtain the Character of faithful Servants, they must be sincere Lovers of, and diligent and impartial Enquirers after Truth, and conscientiously attend the Directions, which in the Gospel are given to them, as Men, as Christians, and as Ministers, and determine not to know any Thing but JESUS CHRIST and him crucified, *i. e.* to make the Interest of his Kingdom, in the Salvation of Mankind, the ultimate End of all they do.

They must pray for their People, and with them, as there is Occasion, and be Examples to the whole Flock, in Word, in Conversation, and in Doctrine. And blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh shall find so doing.

Such have the greatest Reason to hope that their faithful Labours, will be crown'd with Success. But however this be, yet their Labour shall not be in vain in the LORD, for though *Israel* be not gathered, yet their  
Reward

Reward is with the LORD, and their Judgment with their GOD.

And now this is the Charge given to those who are intrusted with the important Business we are now assembled upon, to take Care that they introduce none, but those they have Reason to hope, are of this Character.

Unfaithful Men appear more dangerous in no Station of Life than in this: As 'tis not so immediately Men's temporal Interest, as their everlasting Welfare, which under GOD, is intrusted with Ministers; and they should faithfully watch for Souls, as those who must give an Account.

Indeed the most faithful Ministers of CHRIST, are but Instruments in the Hands of the Divine SPIRIT, in the Salvation of Men: *Paul* may plant, and *Apollos* water, but it is GOD who giveth the Increase.†

Nor is the Validity of Ministers Administrations, or their Success, necessarily connected with their Faithfulness: Such a Thought can't be supported, either by Reason or Divine Revelation.

And though according to the Nature of Things, the Advantages and Motives to a religious Life, are much smaller, and the Temptations to a careless thoughtless Conduct much greater, where there is manifest Unfaithfulness in a Teacher; yet if any of this Character gain Admission into the Ministry, and are by the great Head of the Church permitted to continue in it, we may safely depend upon it, that none of his Hearers shall be lost, purely through his Unfaithfulness.

While we sincerely attend upon CHRIST, in religious Services, we may be sure, that he will not suffer us finally to perish for the Sake of the Negligence or Badness of those we are by his Providence call'd to sit under.

And though this Consideration, should not in the least lessen our Care to introduce only those who are faithful Men, yet it may quiet the Minds of those who

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† 2 Cor. iii. 6.



really are, or only suspect they are placed under the Instructions of those of a contrary Character.

And this necessary Caution, we should fix in our Minds, never to suspect Insincerity or Unfaithfulness, where 'tis not discovered by Men's Conversation.

Those Ministers must be accounted faithful, who by the general Tenor of their Lives appear to be so, and they ought to be esteem'd in Love for their Work's Sake, 'till the contrary appears in them. And, Oh! how happy is it, when upon good Grounds, they can say with the Apostle, *Brethren, be ye Followers of us*; conscientious Integrity will inspire them with Courage in the Discharge of their Duty, and their upright Behaviour gives them a hopeful Prospect of having many Followers.

But as Men, to whom these Things are committed, must be faithful, so

2. They must also have Ability to teach others. *The same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

The Word signifies here, sufficient, or proper, and intends those who are equal to the Business of teaching and directing others. An honest faithful Disposition is necessary, but this alone is insufficient, in this arduous Employment.

Though we ought to show the greatest Respect to real Sincerity and Goodness in every Person, yet many of this Character, deservedly esteem'd in common Life, would be look'd upon, and justly treated with Contempt, if they should be set up for Teachers.

Every honest weak Man, with as much Propriety, and less Inconvenience, might attempt to show his Gifts at the Bar, or Council-Board, than in the Pulpit, and he must render himself contemptible, when he does either, with Persons of any considerable Thought. And though we might pity the Weakness of such a Man in desiring to be a Teacher of others, yet we must blame the Rashness of those, who contrary to the solemn Charge, now

under Consideration, should encourage him in it, or authorize him to this Service.

The greatest Abilities, may advantageously be employed in this great and difficult Work, and there are many Things which must concur, and to a considerable Degree be found in a Man, before he can properly be judged able or sufficient to be appointed a Teacher of others ; a few of which I shall just mention.

1. The natural Powers of his Mind must be considerable.

To what Cause it is owing, whether to the Mind or to the Habitation, in which 'tis lodg'd, that there is such a Difference in the natural Abilities of Men, is not my Business at present to enquire, but the Fact is apparent : And a great Regard ought to be had to this, in separating Men to an Employment of so great Consequence. If there is not a good Foundation laid in Nature, every Thing that is adventitious to the Man, can hardly be suppos'd, to render him equal to such a Service.

2. Another necessary Qualification is Knowledge.

This Men are not born with, but it must be acquir'd : And those who desire to be Teachers, without a considerable Degree of it, do the most effectually discover their Want of it.

Under the Mosaic Dispensation, the Lips of the Priests, who were the standing Teachers of that People, were to preserve Knowledge : And the State of Things under the Gospel, requires a greater Degree of Knowledge, in those who are Teachers in the Church of CHRIST.

Wise and able Teachers under GOD, are the great Support of the Christian Church ; and nothing except the Name of Christianity, is like, long to survive a learned Ministry ; and it looks with a threatening Aspect, when there is a Disposition among a People, to seek after or encourage ignorant Teachers, which is nothing less than chusing Darkness rather than Light.

It must appear to any Man who does not stifle his natural Reason, that no small Degree of Knowledge is necessary,



ecessary for one who has the Charge of conducting Mankind in the Paths of Truth and Vertue ; and that the more general and extensive his Knowledge is, the more capable is he of being serviceable to the Interest of CHRIST's Kingdom in the World.

Ministers, like *Apollos*, ought to be Men *mighty in the Scriptures*, not barely Textuaries (some such may be found among the most ignorant) but such as have a good Understanding of these sacred Writings.

And particularly as Ministers of the New-Testament, they ought rightly to understand the Way of Man's Recovery from a State of Sin and Death by a Redeemer. 'Tis necessary that they have a right Apprehension of the Terms of Man's Acceptance with GOD, thro' CHRIST the Mediator, otherwise they cannot shew to Men the Way to eternal Life.

They must rightly understand the Nature of that Repentance towards GOD, and Faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which they are daily to preach, and of those good Works which they are constantly to injoin upon those who believe in CHRIST.

They must know how to instruct others, in the Scripture-Doctrine of Man's primitive Apostacy from GOD, with its Effects upon the whole human Race, and what it is to be born again, and so to become new Creatures in CHRIST JESUS ; and also in the Nature, as well as Necessity of that Assistance of the Divine SPIRIT, graciously promised to us in the Gospel, in our turning to GOD, and in walking with him in Newness of Life, and in New-Obedience. And they must also be able clearly to exhibit to others, the Scripture-Character of good and bad Men.

They ought to have a competent Understanding of those Predictions and Types, which point out and prefigure the Person and Offices and Sufferings of our Redeemer, in the Old Testament, and be able from the Writings of the Gospel, to prove the Accomplishment of them, in him whom we receive, as the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

They

They should be well acquainted with the Evidences of Christianity, and those Arguments, by which the Truth of divine Revelation is supported, that they may not only be able to teach them to others, but also to give a substantial Reason of the Hope which is in them, and so put to Silence, Infidels and Gainsayers. And I think it must be allowed, that a considerable Deficiency here, renders a Man utterly unfit to be a Teacher in the Church of CHRIST.

They should know how to paint out Vertue and Vice in their true Colours, and urge the powerful Motives of the Gospel in their full Force, upon the Minds and Consciences of Men, that they may be persuaded to escape the Wrath which is to come, and lay hold on eternal Life.

They must be able to instruct Men in the Duties incumbent upon them, in their various Places and Stations of Life, and the Temptations to divert from Duty, with which their several Paths are continually beset.

And as a great Part of the Business of a Minister terminates in the House of GOD, he ought especially to know how to conduct himself with Decency and Propriety there. 'Tis no light Thing to stand up in publick and speak to, or in the Name of the great GOD. Every Thing here offer'd to the People in GOD's Name, as to the Matter of it, should be substantial, as well as agreeable to Truth, and be deliver'd with becoming Solemnity, tending in the first Place to inform the Mind, and rectify the Judgment, and then to bow the Will and win the Heart.

And as the Truths to be delivered, are of different Importance, so each Truth should have its due Weight, and be considered in its proper Place and Season.

And the various Capacities and Circumstances of Persons are to be considered, that so what is deliver'd, may be accommodated to them all. And it must be considered, that as great, or greater Degrees of Knowledge, are requir'd where an Audience is less knowing, if not to

please



please, yet to profit the Hearers. 'Tis a great Mistake to suppose, that Ministers of low Attainments in Knowledge, may be sufficient in obscure Places, or among an ignorant People: for certainly a greater Degree of Knowledge is necessary, where Instruction is most needed, and where Things are to be explain'd and levelled to the meanest Capacities; this is a Work few are fully equal to.

And to dispose and methodize publick Discourses, so as to have them rightly understood and easily remembred, requires no small Degree of Knowledge.

A loose and vague Course of Preaching or Haranguing an Audience, though for a while it may probably be grateful to the Ear, is not likely to have any abiding good Effect.

And Care should be taken, that Hearers are affected with the Weight and Importance of what is delivered, and not barely with the Address, or Sound of the Voice, which act only mechanically: And that the Passions, which may be helpful to the Mind in Religion, are not so rais'd, as to cloud and disturb it. Warm Addresses to the Passions, are sometimes necessary, and there is no Danger of their being rais'd too high, while Reason is preserv'd in its free Exercise.

And when the Passions of Men, are address'd they must be consider'd as belonging to reasonable Beings, and nothing must be offer'd to raise them, but what Reason can fully acquiesce in. And now in these Things Knowledge is necessary to direct, and the unhappy Effects of the Want of it, too often seen.

And as Ministers are to lead in the publick Prayers of the Congregation, a Deficiency in Point of Knowledge, can't but appear to be of awful Tendency. The Circumstances of the Assembly are to be consider'd and spread before the Father of Mercies, through our Lord Jesus CHRIST, as well as Prayers, Intercessions and giving of Thanks to be offer'd for all Men. And now to do this, so as properly to reach the Case of those, who  
join

join in it, and of all Mankind, requires much Knowledge and Judgment in those who are the Mouth of the People to the great GOD.

We too often hear crude and unintelligible Expressions utter'd before the LORD, which none can join in, and that a mistaken Liberty is sometimes taken by Men in their publick Prayers, to introduce their own particular Opinions, and to discover their private Resentments, to the intire Hindrance of the Devotion of others.

And though I am far from being an Advocate for invariable Forms of Prayer, yet since the Preacher is to chuse out acceptable Words, with Parity of Reason, we ought to be capable of doing, and to do the same, in our publick Addresses to Almighty GOD, and not altogether to trust to our Invention, to suggest Thoughts and Words in this great Duty. This can't be the true Intent of praying with the Spirit, for we then pray with the Understanding also. And it deserves our Consideration, Whether we have not generally gone into Extremes here.

And further, A considerable Knowledge of human Nature, is a very necessary Qualification in a Minister of the Gospel.

A Teacher must understand himself, and unless he has made considerable Advances in this Knowledge, he is not likely to be very successful in his Endeavours to teach others.

He must know something of his own Abilities, and what he is equal to, and not only be acquainted with the Strength, but with the particular Turn of his own Mind, before he can prosecute any Thing to Advantage for the Benefit of others.

GOD has distributed among his Ministers various Gifts, and thereby fitted them to answer different Purposes in his Service, and their Usefulness greatly depends upon a Knowledge of this. Again,

A Teacher ought to be acquainted with the World, with the various Capacities, Tempers and Designs of Mankind.



Mankind : This will greatly help him as a Watchman and a Ruler, as well as a Teacher in the Church of CHRIST : A Man must be acquainted with Men, as well as Things, if he would teach and rule well. This Knowledge of human Nature, is of the greatest Service, in judging of those religious Appearances which are to be found among a People, whether more general or limited. For however we understand real Christianity in Theory, as taught in the Gospel, or may have experienced the Life and Power of it in ourselves, we shall be at a Loss in particular Instances to judge of the Subjects of it as becomes Ministers, 'till the Springs of human Nature are in a good Measure disclosed to us, and we have learned how far the bodily Passions, or a disorder'd Imagination may cloud real Goodness, and on the other Hand cause a near Resemblance of it.

And Ministers have no less Need of this Knowledge in their common Conduct and Conversation among their People. Persons must be applied to, and treated according to their various Tempers and Circumstances, if we expect to have Access to their Minds, and so promote their best Interest, or to acquire that Character which brings us into a Capacity of being serviceable. And the Want of this Knowledge of Mankind, tends the most of any Thing, to a mean and contracted Way of thinking and acting, which is unbecoming the Character of an Ambassador of the Son of GOD.

And further, though it may not be necessary to the Discharge of the sacred Function, that a Minister of the Gospel be perfect in all the liberal Arts and Sciences, yet a happy Foundation is laid, by his being instituted in the Principles of these, for the Acquirement of those Truths, which have immediate Relation to his Office. And tho' we trust the sacred Oracles are faithfully translated from the Languages in which they were originally wrote, yet those especially who are to be Teachers of others, should be able to satisfy themselves that they are. And the Knowledge of the learned Languages greatly assists us  
in

understanding and teaching in our own, with Clearness and Propriety.

And since there are in the sacred Writings frequent References to the Manners and Customs which were peculiar to those Ages of the World, in which they were written; we must remain ignorant of many divine Truths, if we have not a Knowledge of the Things there refer'd to.

In a Word, Ministers must understand their proper Business, and know the Limits which their great Lord and Master has fix'd, and when they transgress them. They should be able with Strength and Clearness to maintain and defend the Truths and Rights and Liberties of Christianity, and to withstand Errors and Innovations of every Kind, and understand how to conduct and teach so as to adorn the Doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all Things.

3. Fortitude is a Qualification necessary for a Gospel-Minister. There are many and great Difficulties to encounter in this important Service; and the Man who has not Firmness of Mind sufficient to withstand them, has not Ability to be a Teacher of others.

True Fortitude is easily distinguished from Rashness and a boisterous turbulent Temper, tho' the one is often mistaken for the other. This true Courage animates a Man to move on in the Tract of Duty with Steadiness and Intrepidity; it raises us above the Fear of Man, that Fear which abates our Vigour, and hinders us from pursuing our proper Business. We discover this Greatness of Mind, not when we rush on without Thought, as the Horse rusheth into the Battle; nor when we are insensible under Trials; but when from a Consciousness of our being in the Way of Duty, and a firm Belief of the divine Promises, we can despise the Frowns and Terrors of the World, and keep an even Balance under the severest Threats, and remain unmoved when the Pillars of the Earth shake. The Language of one possess'd of a suitable Degree of this, is like that of the truly heroic Apostle Paul,



*Paul, I can do all Things thro' Christ strengthening me ; and so to the same Purpose under pressing Troubles, None of these Things move me.*

And now, Who have more need of this Temper, in a considerable Degree, than Gospel-Ministers ? Their Work is arduous, 'tis important, and requires the free Exercise of every Faculty of the Mind. They have every Thing in Man, which is contrary to God to oppose, as well as Principalities and Powers from above.

And the peculiar Circumstances of the Ministers of the Gospel in these Churches, render this Virtue more necessary, as they are immediately dependent upon their People for a Support, and sometimes unhappily experience the withdraw of it, as well as the People's Affection, for their steady Adherence to the Faith and Order of the Gospel. And what need hath one cloathed with the Wants and Infirmities of the humane Nature, of no small Degree of Fortitude to withstand such a Tryal ? And tho' the Servant of CHRIST must be meek and gentle in all Things, and be possessed of that Wisdom from above, which is easy to be entreated and full of Compassion ; yet he must be resolute in the Cause of CHRIST, and not basely betray the Interest of his great Lord and Master, for the Sake of pleasing any Man, or to secure his worldly Advantage. The great Truths and Doctrines of the Gospel, can never be safely intrusted with a Man of a mean cringing Temper, who will be inclined, instead of leading on those under his Care steadily in the Paths of Truth, to fall in with every popular Opinion, and follow the Stream with the Multitude. A Teacher while he is aw'd and govern'd by the Dictates of others, will be unstable in all his Ways, and it must issue in his Contempt, if not to the Disadvantage of the Truths of the Gospel. And there is more in this Virtue towards perfecting the Character of a good Minister than is generally thought of. I shall only add,

4. Prudence is a Qualification necessary for a Teacher in the Church of Christ. Prudence is by some pro-

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perly called practical Knowledge. In the sacred Oracles 'tis denominated *Wisdom and Discretion*. It intends a right Use and Application of Knowledge, or that Skill by which we do, and time Things in the best Manner. Every Thing is beautiful in its Season; Words and Actions fitly spoken and done are like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver; but ill tim'd and ill done, though in themselves good, become odious and render the Author contemptible.

And the Nature of the pastoral Relation, and of that Rule which Ministers are to bear in the House of GOD, call for a superior Degree of Prudence. Their proper Business leads them to be concerned with Persons of different Ages and Characters, and here this Wisdom is necessary to direct, in their Instructions and Discipline, as well as common Conduct, that they give no just Reason for Offence in any thing, but behave so as to maintain Truth and Peace. 'Tis evident from the Nature of Things, as well as common Observation, that all other ministerial Accomplishments, without a considerable Degree of Prudence are in a great Measure useless.

How many Men otherwise able and well disposed, has the Want of this rendered unserviceable in the Church of CHRIST? How many Towns and Churches have been thrown into Confusion, thro' the Want of this, tho' in other Respects, those at the Head of them, have not been deficient? How many devout Prayers, and well studied Discourses as well as more private Counsels, have lost their designed Effect, by Means of some Peculiarity or Want of a prudent Management. Certainly then, this ought to have its due Weight with those who introduce others to this important Service.

Thus I have imperfectly hinted at what I proposed. I might would the Time allow, improve what has been offered, to excite us all to Thankfulness to GOD for the invaluable Privilege, we in this Land enjoy by our Schools and Colleges, where no human Means are wanting to qualify



qualify Men for this sacred Employment. That our Teachers are not imposed upon us, but we have the Liberty of choosing for our selves Men of Integrity and Ability. That we enjoy the Gospel in its Purity, and that nothing but the Truths therein revealed are committed to us. May these glorious Privileges be continued to us so long as the Sun and Moon endure. May we stand fast in the Liberty wherein CHRIST hath made us free, and not by our Sin and Folly provoke a righteous GOD to take it from us. But I must close only with a few Words by Way of Address.

I. To those in the Ministry present, to whom the Charge we have been considering immediately relates.

Fathers, Let us duly consider, how much the Honour of GOD our SAVIOUR, and the Interest and Welfare of these Churches depends upon the careful Observance of this Charge. It has been happy for this Land, that it has so long been faithfully observ'd. Let no present Discouragements damp our Spirits and prevent our best Endeavours that it may yet be so. The greatest Part of the People through this Land (blessed be GOD) do yet prize an able and faithful Ministry, and the Doctrines which are according to Godliness. Let us be valiant for the Truth, and their Interest, and by strictly keeping this Charge help them still to walk in the Truth. And if our Interest in the People should decline for our close Adherence to this Charge, we may draw Support from nobler Views, from that condescending Promise of CHRIST, *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the End of the World.* Amen.

II. I now turn my Address to the Person who is about to take the Charge of this People.

Dear Sir, You are now to have committed to you, as a Minister of CHRIST, the great Truths and Doctrines of the Gospel; O keep that which is committed to you. We trust, that we now commit these Things to one faithful and able by the divine Help, truly and profitably to dispense them to others. But God only knows  
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your Heart, and with what Views, you enter upon this great and honourable Service. O see to it that your Heart is right with GOD, and that his Glory is your highest Aim, in what you are now about to do.

Consider, Sir, That you are to receive the solemn Charge as coming from GOD, and not Man. We commit no Opinions or Doctrines of our own, or of other Men to you, but the Doctrines of CHRIST, as contained in the Bible : This sacred Book you are to receive ; this, and this, only is to be your Rule of Faith and Practice and Preaching : This is a sure Foundation, and other Foundation can no Man lay.

Study to understand more perfectly the Mind of CHRIST as revealed in his Gospel, and that you may encrease in every ministerial Accomplishment.

You are entring upon the Labours of one † (now with GOD) who was a Scribe well instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven, and we trust has left in the Minds of this People that Sense of divine Things, which may the more readily dispose them to receive your faithful Instructions. May a double Portion of his Spirit rest upon you, and your Sun not set in a Meridian Lustre as he did.

But you must consider, your Time may be short, and therefore carefully redeem it ; you have loud Calls in Providence to stir you up to this.

*Our Fathers where are they ? And the Prophets do they live forever ?* Your honoured and reverend Father, \* whose Memory is dear to all the Churches, was in the Midst of his Days, translated to a better World ; and you are now in Tears for the Loss of a hopeful younger Brother, † just entring upon the Stage of Action. But

alas !

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† The Rev. Mr. James Allin, who was ordained Nov. 5th 1718, and died Feb. 18th, 1746, 7.

\* Rev. Mr. John Brown of Haverhill, Æt. 46, settled in the Year 1719, died Dec. 2. 1742.

† Ward Brown, Æt. 20, who took his first Degree at Cambridge the last Commencement, soon after entred into the publick School at Plymouth,



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alas ! Providence permitted him to continue no longer than to give raised Expectations of what he might have been and done in the World. But GOD, the GOD of your Father liveth.

See to it, that you do not engage in this arduous Work in your own Strength, for *who is sufficient for these Things ?* But humbly and fervently seek to GOD in the Name of CHRIST for Help and Direction to be granted you at all Times, and in all your Services.

Let the Example of CHRIST be your Pattern, imitate him in his Compassion to the Souls and Bodies of Men, and endeavour to be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from Sinners, as he was.

Bear this your People upon your Heart, at the Throne of Grace, and willingly spend and be spent for them. Remember that awful Account you must at last give to him who is now sending you forth into his Vineyard. Dread the Frowns of the angry Judge, who with additional Indignation, will pronounce the dreadful Sentence upon wicked and unfaithful Ministers : But with ravishing Smiles, will welcome the good and faithful Servant to the Joys which flow at his right Hand for evermore. There with unspeakable Joy may you at last present the Flock now to be committed to your Care.

3. I would now in a few Words address this Church of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and others of this Town. Honoured and Beloved,

With Minds full of Gratitude to the great Shepherd, we are now assembled with you on this joyful Occasion. And though GOD forbid, that we or you should so soon, and so far forget your late dear and worthy Pastor, as not to consider his awful Rebuke, to you and us, in his Removal in the Midst of his Usefulness, and so as not to drop a Tear over his, and the Grave of his Con-

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*Plymouth* ; in which after having served one Month to the great Satisfaction of Parents and Children, he was seized with a Fever, and died *Sept. 16.* His Death was uncommonly lamented by the Inhabitants of that Place, and his Body decently inter'd at their Expence.

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fort,† who has more lately followed him ; yet we would rejoice with you, that the Repairer of Breaches, has in Judgment remember'd Mercy for you. 'Tis with Pleasure that we view your Conduct in the Steps you have taken towards a Resettlement, and that GOD has led you to the Choice of one upon whom we can cheerfully lay our Hands, and commit to him the Truths of the Gospel, and the Care of your immortal Souls under CHRIST : being satisfied of his Faithfulness and Ability for this great Work.

And now Brethren, Behold the Man whom you have chosen to be your Minister. Your Affection for him has been sufficiently discovered by your Choice of him, and the Provision you have made for his Support. And now you have begun well, what should hinder you from proceeding in the same Manner ? May he never become *your Enemy for telling you the Truth*, and his steady Adherence to the Rules of his great LORD and Master. May he never be diverted from his proper Business thro' your Neglect in fulfilling your Engagements to him. Never think that to be lost, which is given to support one in studying and endeavouring your best Interest. Avoid unjust Jealousies and Suspensions of him, and always consider that he is one of *like Passions with your selves*.— A substantial Evidence of your growing Affection to him, will be your Readiness to hearken to the Counsels of of GOD which he brings to you.

Cease not daily to pray for him ; this is in Effect praying for your selves and for your Children. Forsake not the assembling your selves together in the House of GOD, as the Manner of some is. Walk in the Ordinances and Commandments of the LORD blameless, and so let him always have the Joy of seeing you walk in the Truth. And we pray GOD that he may long be continued a rich Blessing to you and to your Children. *Finally, Brethren,*

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† Mrs. Mable Allin, youngest Daughter of the Rev. Mr. Shepard of Lynn, died June 27. 1748, *Æt.* 62.



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*farewel; be perfect, be of one Mind, live in Love and Peace, and the GOD of Peace will dwell with you.*

I close with one Word to all of every Rank and Degree in this numerous Assembly.

Be persuaded each one of you, heartily to comply with that which is the great End of the Gospel-Ministry, viz. to bring us to Lives of new and Gospel-Obedience. We must all of us shortly appear before the Judgment-Seat of CHRIST that every one may receive according to the Things done in the Body, whether good or evil. Seeing then we expect this, O what Manner of Persons ought we to be! We who are assembled here to Day, shall probably all meet together no more, till we are summoned by the Voice of the Arch-Angel to appear together before the Tribunal of CHRIST. O that we might all gain an Interest in him who will preside in that awful Day; that so our Judge may be our Friend, and we may all be so happy as to hear him saying to us, *Well done good and faithful Servants, enter ye into the Joy of your LORD.*

*(Now to him that is of Power to stablish you according to the Gospel and the Preaching of JESUS CHRIST; — To GOD only wise, be Glory through JESUS CHRIST for ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.

Wentworth  
OCT 12 1864

My dear Sir,  
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the matter of the  
land in the town of Newbury, Mass. and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the  
proper authorities for their consideration. I am, Sir, very respectfully,  
Yours, &c.  
J. W. Wentworth

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